

In the Claims:

Cancel claim 3 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Amend claims 1, 4, 8, 17-19 and 21 to read as follows:

1. (Amended) A monolithic ceramic filter comprising a honeycomb structure comprising cells extruded along an elongation axis and partitioned by a partition wall formed of a porous ceramic material, wherein an increased thickness portion of said partition wall of the honeycomb structure has an increased thickness as compared to a remaining basic portion of the partition wall, said increased thickness portion constituting a reduced flow resistance portion which continuously extends from an interior of the honeycomb structure to a lateral outer wall surface of the honeycomb structure so as to form a continuous flow path of reduced flow resistance as compared to the flow resistance of the remaining basic portion of the partition wall within the increased thickness portion along the partition wall extending over a plurality of cells to reach said lateral outer wall surface of the honeycomb structure,

said lateral outer wall surface extending substantially parallel to the elongation axis of the cells, and

said increased thickness portion extending over substantially an entire axial length of the honeycomb structure along the elongation axis of the cells.

4. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1, wherein the reduced flow resistance portion comprises a plurality of wall portions of increased thickness as compared to the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall, said plurality of wall portions of increased thickness extending from one cell opening end of the honeycomb structure to another cell opening end thereof.

8. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the increased thickness portion of the reduced flow resistance portion has a thickness that is 2 to 5 times the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall of the honeycomb structure.

17. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the honeycomb structure has a filtration membrane on a surface facing each cell of the honeycomb structure.

18. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 17, wherein an intermediate porous layer is disposed between the honeycomb structure and the filtration membrane.

19. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 17, wherein the filtration membrane is a porous ceramic having a smaller pore size than that of the honeycomb structure.

21. (Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the increased thickness portion of the reduced flow resistance portion has a thickness that is 1.5 to 10 times the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall of the honeycomb structure.